

# Courier



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Wishing you a happy holiday season.  
Thanks for your support all year long.  
- Courier

## Santa's Ride collects toys for hospitalized children

You could hear it from a distance – the growing roar of the Fairfax

County Police Motorcycle Squad as it came to the Government Center on Wednesday,



Motorcycle Santa, Mrs. Claus and helpers are surrounded by some of the children at the Government Center when the police motor squad came to pick up the toys.

Dec. 14, to collect toys for underprivileged children in the area. Santa, complete with red suit, white beard and motorcycle helmet, and accompanied by Mrs. Claus

*See Santa, page 2*

## DIT upgrades Office applications

The Department of Information Technology is deploying Microsoft Office 2003 to county desktop computers this winter. In addition to new versions of Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint and Publisher, the new Office suite also contains InfoPath, an information-gathering and management tool. Office 2003 will be rolled out as a package along with Right Fax, Office Communicator and a customizable toolbar.

♦ Right Fax integrates with Outlook and the entire MS Office suite to allow county employees to conveniently send faxes directly from their workstations. Please consult with your agency management before using this product to fax personal health information or other confidential data.

♦ Office Communicator allows county employees to collaborate with their co-

*See Upgrade, page 3*



**Santa and the motor squad elves leave the Government Center.**

### **Santa, from page 1**

and a whole squad of policeman elves, greeted children from the county day care center and others who came to see the event.



**Frosty and admirers**



Frosty, the Snowman, and the elves passed out candy canes and posed for pictures with the wide-eyed children.

This is the 17th year for the Santa's Ride toy collection. The program began in 1988 as a campaign to benefit the sick and needy children at Inova Fairfax Hospital. During the years, the project grew to include the efforts of the Fairfax County Police Motorcycle Squad, Office of the Sheriff, police departments of the Town of Vienna and the City of Fairfax, and the Virginia State Police.

The response to this project from county employees, community organizations and residents has been very

positive. Now, the results of the holiday project benefit underprivileged children throughout the county. For example, toys are slated for the

children's ward at Fairfax Hospital, the Hispanic Community Center and the Ronald McDonald House in



**Santa and Anita Vines**

Fairfax and are delivered the week before Christmas. Toys are picked up from several collection points around the county.

**Anita Vines**, county printing office, has coordinated the toy collection project for the Government Center, Pennino and Herrity buildings for many years. All of the toys, books and stuffed animals collected were located in the front of the Government

Center for Santa and his elves to load up. More than 15 boxes of items were picked up by the motorsquad.

"Everyone who made a contribution can feel good knowing that their gift will make some children happy this holiday season," said Vines.

She gave a special thanks to **Nancy Lober**, **Fran Berkery** and the entire Department of Family Services, and to **Lorrie Bennett** in the Library for their contributions to the project. "Often, just a little effort on our part can make such a difference in a child's outlook. There's nothing like a teddy bear to make a child smile," she said. ■



**Santa and friends.**



**Children from the day care center waiting for Santa.**

**Upgrade, from page 1**

workers, real-time, from their own desks either in pairs or groups with the ability to share documents they are working with.

- ♦ The toolbar feature speeds access to frequently used tools and applications more conveniently than ever before.

To learn more about the implementation of Office 2003 in Fairfax County, including product overviews and answers to frequently asked questions, please view the Technical

Support Services Intranet page: <http://infoweb/DIT/TID/SSB/Office2003/default.htm>.

The pilot program for testing Office 2003 is drawing to an end and implementation is just around the corner. If you have questions about Office 2003, please contact your agency IT staff or the Technical Support Center at 703-222-3535, option #1, TTY 711. Questions also may be submitted to the Office 2003 implementation team by e-mail at [Office2003@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Office2003@fairfaxcounty.gov). ■



## Easy-to-use training lined up for Microsoft Office 2003 transition

To make the transition easy to Microsoft Office 2003, the DIT Learning Center in Suite 364 of the Government Center is providing a full range of training programs for these applications to include new e-Learning modules. "Sometimes, people get apprehensive when automated systems change, but with access to the self-help e-Learning modules and the instructor-led training, the transition to Microsoft Office 2003 should be both quick and easy," said **Sonja Vaughan**, manager of the DIT Business Applications Resources branch.

**Lane Poe**, business analyst in the Learning Center, said, "In addition to the standard instructor-led training programs, we're offering a self-teaching system using Microsoft training modules, which are basically online short courses, to guide a user through steps to learn about an application." These short online courses are designed to supplement basic instructor-led courses as an adjunct mode of learning.

The online training modules are convenient for employees who need minimal assistance or cannot attend an in-house course. "The modules have been tested and evaluated by various department training coordinators and we feel county employees are going to be very pleased with them," said Poe, pointing out that the modules are intuitive and very easy to use. Note that completing the online modules is only for quick self-help learning and is not recorded in personnel training

files. Consequently, completion of the online modules will not be a part of an employee's official transcript.

Features of the new online Microsoft Office 2003 training modules include:

- ♦ Employees can complete a brief self-evaluation to assess their skill level and determine if they need to take a new training modules for one of these applications.
- ♦ Staff can select one of several lessons based on level of difficulty.
- ♦ In case of interruption, employees may start, stop and re-enter a module anytime.
- ♦ Each module will show the number of lessons and time expected to complete each one, usually five to 10 minutes each.
- ♦ Employees authorized to telework can complete the online training from home.

As some employees may not have full-time access to computers or may find office activity distracting, the Learning Center offers several workstations with computer access in the DIT Learning Lab. These workstations are available at no charge to departments in Suite 364, although a supervisor's permission is required and a reservation should be made. Instructions for reserving the Learning Lab are on the BAR Web site at <http://infoweb/dit/bsd/bar/> under the link to How to Reserve a Computer Classroom. Please only reserve classroom 364.8 for this purpose.

Employees may continue to register for regular Microsoft Office 2003 instructor-led

*See Training, page 4*

**Any questions  
on training for  
MS Office 2003?  
Please contact  
DIT Business  
Applications  
Resources branch,  
703-324-3242,  
TTY 711.**



### Training, from page 3

training through their agency training coordinator.

Employees using a PC on the county network can point their Web browsers to <http://infoweb/dit/bsd/bar/MSOelearning.htm> to find the online modules for the Microsoft Office 2003 applications. When selecting the online training, it may take a few moments to load a "viewer," but then a participant will see the range of application modules and lessons offered under each one. The new training for Microsoft Office 2003 is shown at the top of the menu as well as training modules for

other applications.

According to Poe, "DIT has tried to make this transition as easy as possible by providing online, easy-to-use training modules as well as traditional instructor-led programs. Employees who take advantage of the online training will be enjoying the benefits of the new applications quickly."

If you have any questions about the online training for Microsoft Office 2003, please contact Lane Poe, DIT Business Applications Resources Branch, at [lane.poe@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:lane.poe@fairfaxcounty.gov) or 703-324-3242, TTY 711. ■



### Tips to Implement the Communication Strategy

January 2006 is the deadline to implement the standards and policies for the new Fairfax County Communication Strategy. Important steps are creating stationery templates for your agency or division and to ensuring everyone is following the voice and e-mail message standards. Information about the standards is available at [infoweb/cex/commstrategy/standards/default.htm](http://infoweb/cex/commstrategy/standards/default.htm). And don't forget the new Request for Assistance form ([infoweb/cex/commstrategy/resources/requestform.htm](http://infoweb/cex/commstrategy/resources/requestform.htm)) to request help with your communication needs, including programming for Channel 16. Information about the strategy is on the Infoweb at [infoweb/cex/commstrategy/](http://infoweb/cex/commstrategy/) or by calling the Office of Public Affairs at 703-324-3187, TTY 711. ■

Looking - and feeling - good. Front row: Brenda Gibbs, Wanda Smith, Regina Corbett, Michelle Wickes, Anita Baker; Back row: Chuck Wright, Vishnu Seri, Vanslyn Fuller, Marijke Hannam, George Sturgill.

## Fitness Center produces great results

Do you remember the article in the Sept. 16 Courier about county employees involved in the Jump & Pump class at the Fitness and Wellness Center in the Government Center? Of course you do, and now look at the results. "We lost a total of 66 lbs. I am so proud of all of the participants. I knew it was going to be a challenging run, because of all the holidays

around our timeline. I have never seen such determination from a group that had a limited to non-athletic background give so much effort," said **Chuck Wright**, Fitness and Wellness Center manager and program leader.

"Chuck's class is excellent! I've returned to my pre-pregnancy self through this great workout," said **Michelle Wickes**, Park Authority. "The Jump & Pump class has motivated me to excel physically beyond what I thought I could do," said **Wanda Smith**, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging. "I was successful in losing weight and inches, and will continue to take Chuck's class. He is a terrific motivator."

According to Wright, the Jump & Pump class has no start or finish, so an employee can join anytime. For the schedule of classes, contact Chuck Wright in the Fitness and Wellness Center, 703-324-5590, TTY 711, e-mail [cwright6@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:cwright6@fairfaxcounty.gov). ■



# Online Pay Advice: Frequently asked questions

For over a year now, employees have been able to get their pay statements online. "This is a convenient way to keep up-to-date pay records," said **Evelyn Grieve**, division chief of HR Information Systems, who pointed out that employees can access up to 36 pay periods of pay records. Here are some commonly asked questions and answers regarding this system.

**Q:** I've tried to print my online pay advice but it doesn't look right. How can I get a one-page printout of my statement of earnings and leave (pay advice)?

**A:** If you want a one-page pay advice that mirrors the statements you formerly received by mail, you can request that it be sent to you by e-mail to your county Outlook account. Here's how to do this.

- ♦ Sign on to the Employee Time Menu in TIME and select transaction 040 - Pay Advice.
- ♦ From your pay advice screen, you will see a list of the functions available to you at the bottom of the screen. If you have an e-mail address with the county's Outlook system, you should see function keys listed for the available e-mail options (F3-One Time and F4-Auto). If not, contact the Payroll Division for assistance.

♦ To request a one time e-mail for a specific pay period, press the F3 key located at the top of your keyboard. You should receive a confirmation message at the bottom of your screen advising that an e-mail has been sent. Your pay advice should appear in your Outlook inbox within a few minutes. After opening the e-mail, you can print out a copy.

♦ To request that your pay advice be sent automatically to your county e-mail address each pay date, press the F4 key located at the top of your keyboard. This will take you to a separate enrollment screen, allowing you to sign up for the auto-e-mail option. To enroll, type a Y in the appropriate field and press your enter key (right Ctrl key on some keyboards). Once enrolled, subsequent pay advices will appear in your Outlook inbox after every payroll run (generally, by the Tuesday before payday Friday). After opening the e-mail, you can print out a copy.

**Q:** I currently receive my pay advices by e-mail but delete them after receiving them. I am applying for a mortgage and need to produce copies of my last three pay statements. How do I get copies of my statements from prior pay periods?

**A:** You can access your pay advices for up to 36 pay periods. From your pay advice screen in TIME, press the F9 function key to see a list of all available pay periods. Under the Select column, place your cursor and type an S on the line to the left of the pay period number you wish to select and press your enter key (right Ctrl key on some keyboards). Once you have selected the pay period you need, you can send a one time e-mail to your Outlook account by pressing the F3 function key.

**Q:** I started working for the county a couple of months ago. I received my first few pay advices by mail but have not received my last one. Can you send me another one?

**A:** Employees hired on or after Jan. 1, 2005, are automatically enrolled in the online pay advice program (unless their department payroll contact opts them out because they have no computer access). During the first 60 days after hire, employees actually receive their pay advice online and by mail to allow sufficient time for the payroll contact to opt them out if necessary. Once the 60 days has expired, newly hired employees will only receive their pay advices online. The Payroll Division does not mail duplicate pay advices to employees receiving their pay advices online; however, employees participating in this program have access to their pay advices for the past 36 pay periods via the online screens and/or by e-mail. ■

*If you have any questions about the online pay advice program, please see your Payroll Contact, or call the Department of Human Resources, Payroll Division at 703-324-3412, menu option 4, TTY 711.*



## Focus on Benefits



# Leave payoffs eligible for deferred compensation contribution

Beginning in January, employees terminating or retiring from the county will have a new option for increasing their Deferred Compensation Plan account balance and lowering their taxable income. Employees who terminate or retire from the county will be able to defer the entire amount of their annual leave and compensatory time payoff,

or any portion of it, to the Deferred Compensation Plan, up to IRS limits in effect for the year (see chart for 2006 limits).

month prior to the month that the leave payoff will be processed. DHR generally processes annual and compensatory leave payoffs in the pay date immediately following the pay date with your last paycheck. See the chart for details on how to increase your contribution for the leave payoff check. If you do not submit a new form to change your deduction amount, the deduction taken from your leave payoff will be the amount on record for you in the payroll system at that time.

If you have questions about deferring your leave payoff amount to the plan, contact the Financial Benefits Help Desk at 703-324-4995, TTY 703-222-7314. ■

### 2006 Deferred Compensation Contribution Limits 2006 Plan Limits Deduction Amount (Limit over 26 pay periods)

Normal Limit - \$15,000	\$ 577
Age 50 Limit - \$20,000	\$ 770
Catch-up Limit - \$30,000	\$1,154

This new option will provide those employees who have not been able to put aside as much money as they would like an opportunity to increase their account balance and financially prepare for their retirement.

In order to defer your leave payoff to the Deferred Compensation Plan, the payoff request must be received in DHR in the

#### To increase your contribution for the leave payoff check:

- ♦ Complete a deferred compensation enrollment or change form.
- ♦ Indicate on the form that you are terminating employment and electing the deferral amount from your leave payoff check.
- ♦ Submit the form to Employee Benefits, DHR, Suite 270 by the last day of the month prior to the month in which the leave payoff will be processed.

*Note: If an enrollment or change form is not submitted within the required time frame, the deferral from your leave payoff check will be the amount on record for you in the payroll system.*



## HR Central is one-stop information

HR Central is the first stop to get information on employee services. Located in Suite 270 of the Government Center, those knowledgeable about human resource information can answer your questions or direct you to the appropriate experts.

**Aretha Walker**, seated, gets help from the HR Central staff. Pictured, from left to right, are **Agnetta Palacios**, **Tomika Harris**, **Jan Kendall** and **Rita Kayn**, HR Central manager. The HR Central telephone numbers are 703-324-3311, 703-324-4900, TTY 703-222-7314. ■



# Holiday memories...of food!

Holidays are traditional times for good food, family and friends. This time of the year, many cultures and backgrounds converge into a time of celebrating...and usually, eating.

Several county employees were asked to contribute special holiday memories that included food. The following is a summary of their comments. You can go to the *Courier* online at <http://infoweb/courier> and read their complete stories and find their special family recipes.

Happy holidays, from *Courier*.



## **Eugenia White, Department of Family Services**

Eugenia remembers wonderful times gathering around the Christmas tree, singing carols and just having fun.

When she and her sister were learning to cook, they happened upon

what is now one of their favorite recipes, Lemon Bars.

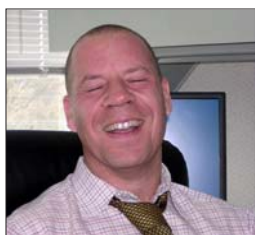
One of the best parts of cooking together, she says, is talking and sampling and talking some more. Read her story and Lemon Bar recipe online.

## **Leila Gordon, Reston Community Center**

Leila tells how her family celebrates the holidays in two locations: New York and Washington, DC. They combine pedestrian and gourmet dishes. And when the families get together, all share some food preparation tasks that includes a lot of talking and laughter...and even cooking. She has a sure-fire ingredient to make wonderful mashed potatoes. Go online to find out what it is and to get the recipe.



## **David Benjamin, Mental Health Services**



David's wife is Portuguese and there are always memories of good food in the house during the holidays. He is fond of a hearty Portuguese soup that will warm up any winter evening. You'll find David's family recipe online.

## **Paula Harper, Office of Public Affairs**

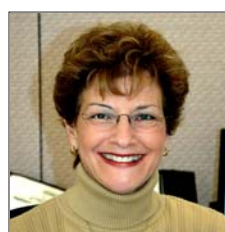
Growing up in West Virginia includes memories of wonderful Christmas dinners, says Paula Harper. The traditional holiday fare (turkey and stuffing) wasn't a tradition until later in her life. She remembers her mother making huge Christmas dinners, drawn



from the area harvest, that included sausage or ham, mashed potatoes, cinnamon sauce, green beans and corn...and always fresh butter. She fondly remembers her mother's hot rolls but admits that she can't duplicate the results or the smell. Paula's full story is online.

## **Rita Kayn, Department of Human Resources**

"My family's favorite food during the holidays is



Potato Latkes or pancakes," says Rita. She makes them from scratch which takes several hours from a recipe handed down in her family, appreciating the advancement of a food processor for the tedious hand-grating of potatoes. She usually

makes a double or triple recipe and finds all the latkes go quickly with homemade applesauce. Try her family recipe for yourself and verify its goodness.

## **Cindy Fortuna, Reston Community Center**

Cindy's family comes from Sweden, so you'd expect wonderful Scandinavian meals. And that's what Cindy reports: a traditional Christmas Eve dinner that includes Swedish meatballs, baked beans, scalloped potatoes with anchovies, cod, cheesecake and, of course, many cookies. Cindy's family recipe for Swedish meatballs is online, too.



## **Paula Ferrer, Fire and Rescue**

"The holidays are about making candies and treats," says Paula, who contributes two

wonderful recipes for holiday sweets.

It was a family affair to make the holiday goodies which always included care packages for her two sisters. She reports that her mother's fruitcake was always a favorite and the holidays couldn't begin without it. You can find Paula's mother's recipe for that wonderful

fruitcake in the online version of *Courier*. ■



# MS Internet Explorer: Adding security and clean-up

Many Internet sites require passwords for access. When the password prompt is displayed, a check box to remember your password may be displayed. This option does allow easy access the next time you return to the site, but also allows access to anybody using the PC. Here are the steps to remove the passwords that you have set:

1. Open MS Internet Explorer.
2. Click Tools\Internet Options.
3. When on the Internet Options window, click the Content tab.
4. On the Content display, locate the Personal information section and click the AutoComplete button.
5. Locate on the AutoComplete Settings window, the Clear AutoComplete history section and click the Clear Passwords button.
6. The Internet Options window appears, displaying "Clear all previ-

ously saved form passwords?"

7. Click the OK button to clear all of your passwords.

8. Note: If you do not want to be prompted to save your password, remove the check mark from User names and passwords on forms under the Use AutoComplete section.

The way your Internet logon information is remembered is by being placed in a cookie. Cookies are information holders used by the Web site when you return and are primarily harmless, but there are always exceptions.

It is a good practice to periodically delete all your cookies. You also should delete your Temporary Internet Files, which are an accumulation of the Web sites you have accessed. Here are the required steps:

1. Open MS Internet Explorer.
2. Click Tools\Internet Options.

## Tech Tip 100

Department of Information Technology  
Technical Infrastructure Division  
Technical Support Center  
Fairfax County Government Center  
12000 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, VA 22035  
Tel: 703-222-3535, option 1  
Fax: 703-222-3396  
TTY 711

3. You are on the General tab.
4. Locate the Temporary Internet files section.
5. To delete your cookies, click the Delete Cookies... button.
6. The Delete Cookies window is displayed, then click the OK button.
7. To delete the Temporary Internet files, click the Delete Files... button.
8. The Delete Files window is displayed, click the OK button.
9. Once back to the Internet Options window, click OK to exit. ■

# 13th annual Holiday Food Drive a big success



Etta Boggs, Carole Lee, Traci Vaughan and Jo Ann Litzenburg at work.

Although Mother Nature diverted the planned delivery date with her snow, six large vehicles were packed with food and personal hygiene items finally made their delivery to the FACETS Food Pantry on Dec. 13. FACETS is a nonprofit organization that provides emergency intervention and educational programs for homeless and low-income people in Fairfax County.

**Traci Vaughan**, Food Drive coordinator, said "Thank you to all county employees who participated in this year's food drive, either by contributing, packing donations, loading and unloading vehicles, or transporting donations. Thanks for all those in the many individual agencies who collected and brought donations to our office over the past couple weeks, especially to the Department of Tax Administration which seems to have made a tradition of going all out for this project. As usual, our thanks to Guest Services for allowing the placement of a collection box and promotional materials in the cafeteria. ■



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# Holidays memories...of food – *their full stories and recipes online*

Almost everyone associates the holidays with food and friends. Whenever a reason to celebrate occurs, usually we include our friends and all enjoy good food. Often, what makes the food good is the preparation which many times includes friends or family. Here are the complete stories of several county employees about their memories of food during the holidays. And they've also provided their recipes for you to try. Enjoy the holidays and the following.



## Eugenia White, DFS

Christmas time is for fun and cheer, family and friends, wonderful gatherings around the tree, and singing Christmas carols that warm the hearts and fill the soul. This is a time of year the family prepares many delectable dishes for the palate to savor.

During my teenage years when my sister and I were experimenting with cooking and baking, there is a dessert that stands out we made during the Christmas season. The dessert, is Lemon Bars, and it is a

favorite of mine.

I remember my sister and I would go into the kitchen and start off by making the crust that is baked before you add the lemon filling. Then we would grate the lemons and mix the rest of the ingredients. And of course, a major part of it all, was the licking of the bowl and utensils.

To this day, I cherish the memory. I keep the lemon bar recipe in my own recipe box to make for others during the holiday season. I hope you enjoy it, too.

### Lemon Bars

#### Bottom crust:

- ♦ 1 c butter
- ♦ 1/2 c powdered sugar
- ♦ 2 c flour
- pinch salt

Cut together like pastry.

Pat into 9x13 pan.

Bake 20 min at 350.

Mix, then spread filling on baked bottom layer and bake at 350 for 25 min. Cool, sprinkle with powdered sugar.

There's a recipe on the web that has the same pastry, but a sweeter, less-lemony filling at <http://southernfood.about.com/od/browniesbars/r/bl00430d.htm>

#### Filling:

- ♦ 4 eggs
  - ♦ 1 1/2 c sugar
  - ♦ 7 Tablespoons flour
  - ♦ 8 Tablespoons lemon juice
- grated rind of one lemon

## Paula Harper, Office of Public Affairs

### Appalachian Christmas

As the holidays approached, flakes of snow or icy chilled rain dropped from bloated gray clouds also signaling hog-butcher time. Change came slow when it bothered to come a'tall to our holler in central West Virginia so mainstream culture made its way to me through Little Golden Books and the *Grit*. And their pictures were as close as I got to turkey and stuffing and other traditional holiday fare until my uncles carried it back with them when I was nearly grown.

Mom would prepare Christmas dinner at home loaded with bounty put away from the harvest. The table was cocooned in steam from freshly ground sausage or ham, mashed potatoes, hot cinnamon sauce from russet apples off the gnarly old tree in the woodlot, green beans and corn from Mason jars in the cellar, freshly churned butter, honey given up by the beehives and golden hot rolls.

Oh, my mom's rolls! The smells from the cook stove are dwarfed in my memory by the sweet pungent scent of yeast dough left to rise for hours in the stone crock behind the pot-bellied stove in the front room.

Flour, salt, yeast, moisture and heat morphed into perfectly golden, crusty-top cotton-textured rolls without my mom measuring a drop of anything.

It is my quest each holiday season to try to recapture some of home at my own holiday table.

Unfortunately my mom's roll tradition is a keen piece of my holiday memory but not of my baking repertoire. My less than perfect attempts only validate that nothing comes close to Mom.



### Leila Gordon, Reston Community Center

Our holidays occur in two locations. They involve my husband's family – his brother and their family – and our family. We gather in DC for Thanksgiving. My husband and I divide the cooking labor in a way he described one year as “you tell me how long you need for the pedestrian dishes and when I can get in the kitchen for the gourmet items!” Apparently, his smoked turkey and secret dressing recipes are high culinary art, while all others are the “easy” things! For Christmas in NY, my sister-in-law prepares dinner featuring the best prime rib imaginable. To our efforts, the NY Gordons contribute desserts and tremendous kitchen and cleanup help. To their efforts, the DC Gordons contribute appetizers and the same help. We have fun at these double-digit gatherings, many jokes and always love – the main ingredient in every dish, pedestrian or gourmet.

#### Leila's Pedestrian Mashed Potatoes

##### Ingredients

- ♦ 1 and a half potatoes per person – preferably redskin potatoes.
- ♦ Whole milk
- ♦ Butter
- ♦ Garlic
- ♦ Sour crème
- ♦ Horseradish
- ♦ Sea/Kosher Salt
- ♦ Freshly Ground Pepper
- ♦ 1-2 bottles of Veuve Cliquot Champagne
- ♦ 1 funny sister-in-law

##### Directions

- ♦ Peel potatoes (do this 2-3 at a time, pausing between sets to open champagne, laugh with sister-in-law at how helpless your husbands are in the potato peeling department and have a gulp of champagne.)
- ♦ Peel some more, pour some more, drink some more and laugh some more until potatoes are peeled.
- ♦ Cut up potatoes in cube-like sizes/shapes
- ♦ Boil in water with garlic, sea salt, and pepper to suit until cube shaped potatoes are soft
- ♦ Determine if you need to open another bottle of champagne
- ♦ Move to other pedestrian side dish tasks in the meantime (while potatoes are boiling)
- ♦ Drain water from pot of potatoes
- ♦ Add milk, sour cream, horseradish to suit (some like “whipped” texture, some like chunkier—the whippier desired, the greater amounts of these except the horseradish).
- ♦ Mash (take turns for fun with your now loopy sister-in-law)
- ♦ Finish champagne and hope the serving of the mashed potatoes times out with everything else. If it doesn't, who cares by then!
- ♦ Enjoy! (These mashed potatoes are great, trust me!)

### David Benjamin, Mental Health Services

My wife is Portuguese and her family still has strong rural ties to Portugal. I had the opportunity to live there for three years where I learned to love so much about that beautiful country. And one of the things I learned to love is their cooking - simple, hearty and just good food. One of my favorite Portuguese dishes is Caldo Verde, or Portuguese Kale Soup. If you try this, I'm sure it will become one of your favorite soups as well.

There are many recipe variations but any yields a deliciously warming winter soup with few ingredients and simple instructions. The dish's agricultural roots (potatoes, kale and chorico or sausage) reflect the country's pride in its rural culture. Though consumed all year long it is particularly typical to serve Calde Verde during the winter holidays. A substantive soup, it is nearly a meal by itself.

Traditionally, the chorico that goes into Caldo Verde is prepared with paprika, salt and other herbs. It is then stuffed into a tripe sleeve and hung in a fireplace to smoke over the winter months before being eaten. Kale and potatoes are grown in most parts of the country and are used in many other Portuguese dishes as well.



#### Caldo Verde (Portuguese Kale Soup)

##### Ingredients:

- ♦ One quarter cup pure olive oil
- ♦ One large vidalia onion, diced
  - ♦ Two thinly sliced cloves of garlic
- ♦ One or two choricos cut into thin rolls
- ♦ Six medium white potatoes
- ♦ Eight cups of cold water
- ♦ One pound of kale or collard greens cut into thin strips
- ♦ A sprinkling of heavy sea salt

##### Directions:

Under a medium light, heat the oil in a large soup pot until a drop of water “pops” when thrown into the oil. Put in the chorico, garlic and onions and stir slowly for 2 minutes. Add the potatoes and water. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and let simmer for 15 minutes, or until the potatoes are almost done. Scoop the potatoes out and put them into a food processor. When they have cooled a little, puree them and then return them to the soup pot along with the kale. Bring everything back to a boil for just a moment, then let simmer again for 2 minutes. When done, throw in your sea salt, stir deeply and serve.



### Cindy Fortuna, Reston Community Center

My mom's side of the family descends from Sweden, so every Christmas Eve we have a traditional Swedish Christmas Eve dinner. The recipes, which have been passed down for generations, include Swedish meatballs, Brunaböner (Swedish baked beans), Jansson's Temptation (scalloped potatoes with anchovies), Lutefisk (cod) and Ostkaka with Lingonberries (Swedish cheesecake). Of course we always have cookies too such as Pepparkakor (gingerbread) and Swedish nuts. I have fond memories of my grandma, in her Swedish apron, over the stove trying to get everything just right. Now my parents carry on the tradition, adding their own special twist to the recipes as the generations before them have, and as will I in the future!

### Swedish Meatballs

This recipe makes approximately 21 meatballs:

#### Ingredients:

- ♦ 1 lb beef (extra Lean)
- ♦ 1/4 cup onion (finely chopped/minced)
- ♦ 1 Egg
- ♦ 1 teaspoon salt
- ♦ 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- ♦ 2 tablespoons butter (melted)
- ♦ 1 cup Ritz crackers, finely crushed (in food processor)

#### Directions:

Mix all ingredients together by hand. Form into balls. Place on foiled, greased jelly roll pan or shallow pan. Bake in 375 degree oven for 30 minutes.

### Rita Kayn, DHR

My family's favorite food during the holidays is Potato Latkes (pancakes). The term *latke* is derived from the eastern European meaning fried pancakes. Traditionally latkes are served with applesauce or sour cream as accompaniments. Of course, I make them from scratch, which takes several hours of preparation and cooking.

### Nanny's Potato Latkes

Yields: about 2 dozen pancakes

#### Ingredients

- ♦ 2 lbs. russet (baking) or Yukon Gold potatoes
- ♦ 1 large onion
- ♦ 1 large egg, beaten
- ♦ Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- ♦ Vegetable oil for frying

#### Directions

- ♦ Peel the potatoes and put in cold water. Using a food processor or grater, coarsely grate the potatoes and onion. Place together in a fine mesh strainer or tea towel and squeeze out all the water over a bowl. The potato's starch will fall to the bottom of the bowl. Reserve the potato starch after the water is poured off.
- ♦ Mix the potato and onion with the potato starch, from the bottom of the bowl. Add the egg, salt and pepper.
- ♦ Heat a griddle or non-stick fry pan and coat with a thin

The recipe I use was handed down to me from my great-



grandmother, who used to grate the potatoes and onions. When she grated them it seemed that she always cut a finger or knuckle in the process. We had Band-Aids available, if needed. I always take the easy way out by using a food processor to grate the potatoes and onions. I also use lots of paper bags (spread out on the countertop) to drain the oil. In order to have leftovers, I usually double or triple the recipe. Our family prefers eating latkes with homemade applesauce. Potato latkes can be made throughout the year, but I never seem to make them at any other time.

- film of vegetable oil. Take about two tablespoons of the potato mixture in the palm of your hand and flatten as best you can. Place the potato mixture on the griddle, flatten with large spatula, and fry a few minutes until golden. Flip the pancake over and brown the other side. Remove to paper towels, or paper bags, to drain.
- ♦ Serve immediately or freeze the potato pancakes and crisp them up at a later time in a 350-degree oven.

### Paula Ferrer, Fire & Rescue

What I remember most about food at the holidays is the time that my mother and I spent every year making various candies and treats. We made Panocha, Sea Foam, Fudge, Divinity, Chocolate Covered Cherries, various cookies and fruitcake. After we got everything made, mom would make up care packages for my two sisters, Sandra and Patricia, and mail them to them in time for Christmas. It just wasn't Christmas without my mom's candies or fruitcake. Best of all...my mom's fruitcake was delicious and everyone loved it (it was never used as a doorstop). Even though she's no longer with us, my sisters and I have carried on with mom's holiday traditions.

Here are two family-favorite recipes to enjoy.

### Panocha

#### Ingredients and directions

Combine the following in a saucepan:

- ♦ 3 cups brown sugar (firmly packed)
- ♦ 1 cup milk
- ♦ 2 tablespoons light corn syrup

Cook over low heat, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Then cook without stirring to soft ball stage (238°F – you need a candy thermometer) until a few drops dropped into cold water form a soft ball.

Add:

- ♦ 3 tablespoons butter
- ♦ 1/8 teaspoon salt

Cool to lukewarm without stirring (110°F). Put into large mixer bowl (you need a stand mixer for this one) and beat on medium-high speed until thickened.

Add:

- ♦ 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ♦ 1 cup pecans, coarsely chopped

Continue beating on medium-high speed until mixture holds its shape. Pour at once into buttered pan. Cool and cut into squares. Makes about 24

### Nina's Applesauce Fruitcake

#### Ingredients

- ♦ 3 ½ cups flour
- ♦ 2/3 cup shortening (solid Crisco)
- ♦ 2 teaspoons baking soda
- ♦ 2 1/3 cups sugar
- ♦ 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ♦ 3 eggs
- ♦ 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- ♦ 2 cups no sugar added applesauce
- ♦ 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- ♦ 2 cups raisins
- ♦ 1 teaspoon salt
- ♦ 1 jar mixed candied fruit
- ♦ 2/3 cups strawberry preserves (you may substitute grape jelly or blackberry preserves)
- ♦ 1 package chopped dates
- ♦ 1/3 cup lemon juice
- ♦ 3/4 ounce brandy flavoring
- ♦ 2 1/2 cups coarse chop nuts (pecans)

#### Directions:

Mix flour, baking soda, salt and spices. Put in raisins to coat them, then set this bowl aside. Mix shortening and sugar in another bowl and cream well. Add eggs and beat well after each one. Add preserves, applesauce, candied fruit, chopped dates, and nuts. Spoon in flour mixture w/raisins and mix well as you go (go slowly or you'll make a big mess). Pour in floured tube pan and bake at 350° for 2 hours (or until toothpick comes out clean).

*Mom would make the fruitcake the weekend after Thanksgiving, wrap it in cheesecloth that was wetted (but not dripping) with Apricot Brandy or Jack Daniels Whiskey, then wrap it in aluminum foil and refrigerate it in an airtight container (a Tupperware cake taker). Each week until Christmas, she'd remove the cheesecloth and re-wet it and then wrap the fruitcake back up. Imagine....Fruitcake that you actually eat!*

**Courier wishes you the very best for the holiday season and a special New Year. Keep those**



**story ideas coming in 2006 to help Courier keep you informed about the good things county employees do.**